

Track 1.5 Bangladesh-India Dialogue

Expanding Tradable Benefits of Trans-boundary Water: Promoting Navigational Usage of Inland Waterways in Ganga and Brahmaputra Basins

Hotel Royal Park Residence, Banani, Dhaka on Wednesday, 8th August, 2018

Background Note

Objectives:

- Share knowledge between the governments of Bangladesh and India on institutional improvements for facilitating Dhubri-Chilmari cross-border local trade
- Create an alternative policy discourse between policy-makers and civil society on institutional improvements for facilitating Dhubri-Chilmari cross-border local trade

Expected Outcomes:

- To generate an informed discussion among policy-makers to accept institutional improvements for facilitating Dhubri-Chilmari cross-border trade

Background and Context:

As part of the Civil Society Fund by The Asia Foundation, CUTS International and its strategic partners are implementing the project titled 'Expanding Tradable Benefits of Trans-boundary Water: Promoting Navigational Usage of Inland Waterways in Ganga and Brahmaputra Basins'.

As part of this project, CUTS has implemented a study in partnership with Unnayan Shamannay, Bangladesh titled – 'Prospects of cross-border trade via small mechanised boats between Dhubri (India) and Chilmari (Bangladesh)'. More details about the project is available here: <http://www.cuts-citee.org/IW/>

Dhubri in Assam, India and Chilmari in Kurigram, Bangladesh are two economically backward areas located on the banks of river Brahmaputra, which are also along the currently functional routes No. 1 and 2 of India and Bangladesh Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWTT) routes. These two locations are the last river ports of either country, also serving as the last declared customs and immigration points of each country.

The goal of this study is to support the facilitation of cross-border local trade using small mechanised boats in the international border area of Dhubri (Assam, India) and Chilmari (Kurigram, Bangladesh) along the banks of the Brahmaputra river for

improved livelihoods and local economy. The objectives of the study are as follows: i) To analyse social, economic and environmental implications of cross-border value chains using small mechanized boats across Dhubri (Assam, India) and Chilmari (Kurigram, Bangladesh); and ii) To sensitize policy makers about the issues at grassroots and challenges at policy level to facilitate cross border movement of small mechanized boats

Track 1.5 Bangladesh-India Dialogue is a high level closed-door meeting between the country diplomats from Bangladesh and India representing Ministry of Shipping, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, and Department of Custom and Excise who will gather to discuss the need on furthering the scope of inland navigation between Bangladesh and India from the perspective of trade, transit, tourism and livelihoods.

This dialogue is expected to generate an informed discussion among policy-makers to accept institutional improvements for facilitating Dhubri-Chilmari cross-border trade and help CUTS to strengthen its further work on this subject.

Discussion Points:

- ✓ What are the existing regulatory provisions and challenges to enable movement of small mechanised boats route between Dhubri and Chilmari?
- ✓ What implications will it have on trade along the Indo-Bangladesh protocol route?
- ✓ How relevant institutions from Bangladesh and India can work together to address those regulatory reforms?
- ✓ What type of commodities that can be traded via the Dhubri-Chilmari route?
- ✓ What are the infrastructure related requirements for facilitating this trade route?
- ✓ What are the legal requirements for facilitating this trade route?
- ✓ What are the livelihood opportunities and gender dimensions due to cross border movement of small boats?